Visa Barrier in Indo-US trade

26. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that the Indo-US trade is likely to be affected by visa barriers;

(b) if so, whether due to frequent visa refusals to Indian exporters and importers by the US Embasy in India has created some problems; and

(c) if so, the measures Government propose in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Genuine exporters and importers who are seeking business visa to the US do not generally face problems. The new US regulations, which came into effect on January 13, 1995, make the timely procurement of visas difficult for Indian professionals. This could have an adverse impact on Indian professionals required to visit the US in connection with the delivery of services particularly in the field of software;

(c) Government have conveyed India's concern to the US Government at various levels both in India and the US. It has been emphasized that the new rules will result in delays in the projects being undertaken by Indian organisations who are working for US industry under contract or in partnership.

The US Government appreciates Indian concerns in this regard. The matter is also under discussion at the WTO since the US regulations are not India-specific, but apply to skilled foreign professionals generally.

Pending applications for allotment of PCO/ISD/STD

27. SHRI O.P. KOHLI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of applications pending with Government for the allotment of PCO/ISD/STD and since when;

(b) the number of PCO/ISD/STD sanctioned by Government in the last three years and the procedure adopted therefor i.e. was that on first come first served or on draw of lots basis; and

(c) the steps taken to eliminate compeletely any unfair means in the allotment of PCO/ISD/STD booths?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House as soon as possible.

(b) 72687 STD/ISD/PCOs have been provided during last three years. STD PCOs are allotted on the basis of recommendtions of an allotment committee duly constituted for each Secondary Switching Area (SSA), by the Department of Telecommunications. The committee gives due weightage to the principle of first come first served.

(c) Action is taken whenever a specific complaints is received.

Card operated public telephone facilities

28. SHRI JAGIR SINGH DARD:
DR. SHRIKANT RAMCHANDRA JICHKAR:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Card Operated Public Telephone Instruments are popular in India;

(b) if so, the number of such instruments functioning at present in the country;

(c) the reason for not installing more of these instruments; and

(d) the target for the coming three years?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) and (b) Only 128 card operated Public phones are working at present. The Services is expected to be popular in due course.

(c) Card operated Public phones are generally unmanned, whereas Department's